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ABSTRACT

This edition of "Issues in Higher Education" discusses the status of access to postsecondary education in the South in the period 1958-1972 and future directions to be considered in improving educational opportunities. In determining the direction that postsecondary education is to take within the current decade and beyond, several key questions are asked and answered: (1) How does one define and measure postsecondary education accessibility? (2) Is higher education more accessible in the South now than 10 or 15 years ago? (3) What inequities exist in accessibility? (4) What policy alternatives exist if one is to attempt to increase the accessibility of postsecondary education? These questions are dealt with in this publication. (Author/HS)

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Expanding Postsecondary Educational Opportunity: Progress and Prospect

Prior to World War II, higher education was for those who could afford it. Categorical scholarship support won public acceptance with passage of the GI Bill, which made colleges and universities accessible to returning veterans. The Sputnik scare of 1957 prodded Congress into passing the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided support for a large number of undergraduate and graduate students, particularly in the sciences.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 expanded access further by loans and Economic Opportunity Grants to large number of blacks, Mexican-Americans and many other low income groups who had limited educational opportunities. The recent passing of the Education Amendments of 1972 guarantees a minimum of $1,400 to students in federal support, less the expected family contribution, and helps to make some form of postsecondary education available to a vastly expanded number of potential students from a much wider range of age groups.

Since the appearance of the "Truman Report," *Higher Education for American Democracy*, in 1947, which urged provisions for public, low-cost, non-selective, easily accessible two-year institutions, states have moved to establish such facilities. In 1957 alone, 18 states passed legislation leading to the establishment or expansion of such institutions.

Yet even as the Truman Commission and the later Eisenhower Commission advocated making higher education more accessible, an essentially restrictive orientation emphasizing high selectivity pervaded many colleges and universities and much of the thinking about higher education.

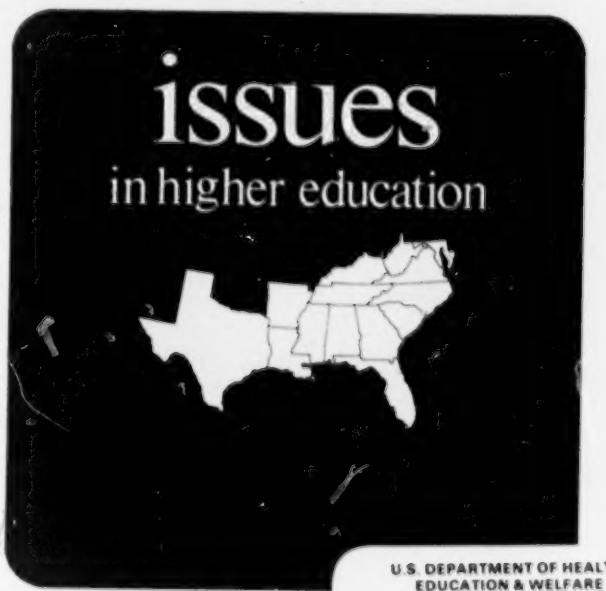
Only in recent years has the Project Talent orientation of the 1950s, which sought to identify the most "able" high school graduates for scholarship aid, been replaced by the belief that the great majority of the "college-age" population can profit from and should be afforded an opportunity to pursue some form of additional postsecondary education.

Colleges and universities wanted to be little Harvards and often judged themselves quality institutions if the tuition and fees charged were comparable to those charged by the Ivy League institutions and if they, too, considered for admission only the top five percent from a high school graduating class. Going to college meant going "away" to college, while relatively accessible institutions in one's home community in some instances were regarded as worse than no institution at all. Minority or low-income students were not about to settle for "second best."

On the other hand, conflicting pressures developed. A college education became the basic requirement for a job with a future. Without regard for personal pain or lack of interest, the student was forced on the academic treadmill. With only limited opportunities available in private institutions, the publicly supported institutions started to draw an increasingly larger percentage of the total student population. If not as prestigious as Harvard, the public institutions did provide opportunities and degrees—described by some as the most expensive aptitude tests ever devised for employment.

Access was expanded in the South in the period 1958-1972 primarily through the establishment of 156 new public two-year institutions and 45 university branches in the SREB states. Public two-year institutions represented 14 percent of all institutions in the South in 1958 and 29 percent of all institutions in the SREB states in 1972. In terms of enrollment and number of institutions, community colleges and technical institutes are the fastest growing component of the South's higher education system.

College enrollments as a percentage of college-age population increased from 29 percent in 1960 to 46



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percent in 1970 within the SREB states. Yet blacks and other ethnic minorities, women, low-income groups and low achievers are not enrolled proportionately in the South's higher education institutions.

In the past, many state higher education coordinating or governing boards were reasonably satisfied that they were providing sufficient educational opportunities if a certain percentage of the population resided within a given number of miles of a publicly or privately supported higher education institution. Recently, the appearance of Warren Willingham's *Free-Access Higher Education* in 1970 and Richard Ferrin's *A Decade of Change in Free Access-Higher Education* in 1971 have objectively defined and expanded the number of dimensions to be considered in discussions of access to higher education.

This edition of "Issues in Higher Education" discusses the status of access to postsecondary education in the South in the period 1958-1972 and future directions to be considered in improving educational opportunities.

In determining the direction which postsecondary education accessibility is to take within the current decade and beyond, several key questions must be asked and answered:

- How does one define and measure postsecondary education accessibility?
- Is higher education more accessible in the South now than 10 or 15 years ago?
- What inequities exist in accessibility?
- What policy alternatives exist if one is to attempt to increase the accessibility of postsecondary education?

Are Higher Education Institutions Becoming More Accessible?

The Willingham and Ferrin studies define free-access institutions as those which (1) charged not more than five percent of the national median annual family income in tuition and fees and (2) admitted at least one-third of their freshmen from the lower half of their high school class.

Ferrin and Willingham collected data for the period 1958-1968. Table 1 further updates the institutional access picture by noting the increase in the number of various types of postsecondary institutions for the period 1958-1972. The percentage of institutions of various types which are regarded as free-access are estimated to be the same in 1972 as in 1968.

The percentage of all institutions classified as free-access has increased more rapidly in the SREB region (from 35 to 38 percent) than outside the region (from 26 to 27 percent) during the period 1958-1972 (Table 1). This was due in part to somewhat lower

Data in the accompanying tables and figures are from Richard Ferrin's *A Decade of Change in Free-Access Higher Education* (1971) and Warren Willingham's *Free-Access Higher Education* (1970). Appreciation is expressed to the College Entrance Examination Board for permission to reproduce and adapt data from these studies.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Institutions Enrolling Freshmen in SREB States Classified as Free-Access by Type, 1958-1972

State	PUBLIC TWO-YEAR				PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR				BRANCHES OF FOUR-YEAR PUBLICS				ALL PRIVATE				TOTAL			
	1958		1972		1958		1972		1958		1972		1958		1972		1958		1972	
	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access	No.	% Free-Access
Alabama	–	–	17	93	10	80	12	60	–	–	5	40	16	6	20	10	26	35	54	48
Arkansas	–	–	2	50	8	100	8	100	1	100	2	100	11	18	12	17	20	55	24	52
Florida	9	78	28	89	3	67	5	20	–	–	–	–	13	15	27	0	25	44	60	44
Georgia	8	62	12	92	11	36	16	7	1	100	1	100	24	8	30	4	44	27	59	25
Kentucky	1	100	–	–	7	86	8	29	–	–	14	100	28	18	24	4	36	33	46	36
Louisiana	–	–	7	100	11	91	11	82	–	–	2	100	9	11	10	0	20	55	30	56
Maryland	8	87	17	100	7	43	9	56	1	100	1	0	20	0	22	0	36	31	49	38
Mississippi	16	100	19	100	8	87	8	50	1	0	1	0	16	31	16	12	41	68	44	56
North Carolina	4	100	32	96	11	64	16	25	–	–	2	0	45	4	45	0	60	20	95	31
South Carolina	–	–	15	100	6	50	9	14	–	–	9	0	23	4	24	0	29	14	57	23
Tennessee	–	–	11	100	10	80	11	70	–	–	3	100	35	3	37	5	45	20	62	29
Texas	32	100	48	95	18	83	23	56	–	–	6	0	46	9	46	2	96	53	123	48
Virginia	–	–	22	85	9	0	12	9	2	0	5	37	30	3	31	0	41	2	70	24
West Virginia	–	–	4	100	9	89	10	70	–	–	–	–	10	10	12	0	19	47	26	44
SREB	78	91	234	94	128	69	158	46	6	50	51	53	326	9	356	3	538	35	799	38
NON-SREB	242	88	527	92	243	47	294	23	39	28	96	75	828	1	996	1	1352	26	1913	27
U.S.	320	88	661	92	371	55	452	31	45	31	147	27	1154	3	1352	1	1890	28	2712	30

Percentage of free-access institutions for 1972 estimated to be the same as in 1968.

2

tuition and fees within the region, corresponding to the relatively lower per capita personal income in the region compared with the nation.

Considerable variation existed among the states. More than half of all institutions in 1972 were estimated to be free-access in Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas, while one-fourth or fewer of the institutions in Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia were regarded as free-access. The most notable increases in the percentage of free-access institutions were in Virginia, Alabama and North Carolina, where community colleges and technical institutes are being or have recently been established. On the other hand, decreases in the percentage of free-access institutions were noted in Texas, West Virginia, Georgia, Arkansas and Mississippi.

By 1972 it was estimated that the SREB region was the only region where nearly half (46 percent) of the four-year public colleges were free-access, compared to 23 percent of similar institutions in non-SREB states. This percentage has declined from 69 percent in 1958. Only one public four-year free-access institution remained in Virginia in 1972, and such institutions were notably lacking in Atlanta, Knoxville, and Houston. Although the first two cities were served by major universities, these institutions were not classified as free-access as of the fall of 1972. Houston's only free-access institution, with an enrollment which was 99 percent black, was not effectively accessible to the white population of the city.

Memphis and Dallas by 1968 served as examples of cities which had grown so rapidly that existing free-access institutions were within 45 minutes commuting distance of diminishing percentages of a rapidly expanding population. The establishment of three public two-year institutions in the period 1969-72 should improve postsecondary educational accessibility greatly in Dallas. The effects of urbanization and the high selectivity of existing universities significantly reduced the accessibility of higher education in the cities noted, and adversely affected the percentage of the population within commuting distance of a free-access institution within the states of Georgia and Texas during the period 1958-1968.

Clearly, public two-year institutions and branches of four-year universities were the most commonly used "delivery vehicles" for free-access education. But as Table 1 notes, they were not uniformly accessible in all states. None of the nine university branches existing in South Carolina in 1972 could be classified as free-access, as such branches are classified in most other states. Nevertheless, these branches have often competed for students and funds with existing or proposed community colleges, technical institutes or area-vocational schools. For several years, South Carolina has had the lowest ratio of freshman college enrollments to high school graduates of any state in the region. Passage of current legislation in South Carolina aimed at establishing a comprehensive community college system could help to remedy this situation.

Is Higher Education More Accessible to a Larger Percentage of People?

Colleges are for people. Thus the number of people affected by the proximity of a college or university is much more important than the percentages of various types of institutions classified as free-access. The percentage of the population within a 45-minute, one-way commuting distance of a free-access institution changed from 36 percent to 50 percent during the period 1958 to 1968 in the SREB states. Outside the region, the comparable percentage increase was from 28 to 39 percent.

As of 1968, the percentage of the total population within commuting distance of a free-access institution ranged from highs of 65 percent and 64 percent in Mississippi and Florida, respectively, to lows of 38 percent and 30 percent in Texas and Georgia (Figure 1). Increases in the percentage of the population within commuting distance of a free-access institution during the period 1958-1968 were highest in Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina and Alabama, while decreases were evident in Texas, Mississippi and Georgia.

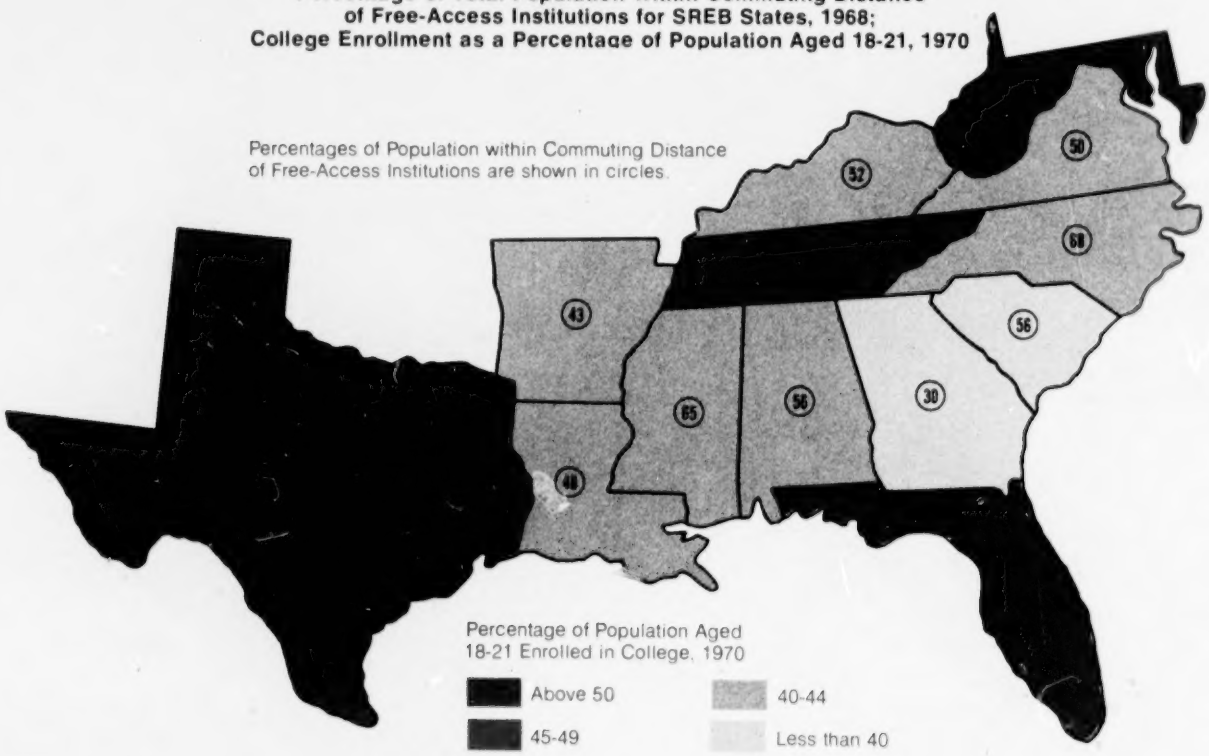
Since 1968, access has been extended to an unknown, but larger, percentage of the population, primarily through a net increase of 39 new public two-year institutions within the SREB region. Access was extended most notably through the creation of nine new public two-year institutions in Virginia and six such additional institutions in the states of North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas.

Figure 1 also indicates that attendance is not necessarily equated with accessibility. North Carolina, according to Willingham's data, ranked first in population coverage in 1968 and tenth within the region in terms of the percentage of the population aged 18-21 enrolled in college. South Carolina tied for eighth place within the region in terms of population coverage in 1968 but was last in terms of the percentage of the population aged 18-21 enrolled in college in 1970.

On the other hand, Texas and Tennessee ranked second and fifth within the region, respectively, in terms of the percentage of the 1970 population aged 18-21 enrolled in college, while ranking thirteenth and twelfth respectively in terms of the estimated percentage of the 1968 total population within commuting distance of a free-access institution.

Figure 1

Percentage of Total Population Within Commuting Distance of Free-Access Institutions for SREB States, 1968; College Enrollment as a Percentage of Population Aged 18-21, 1970



Inequities in Access

Free-access institutions were within commuting distance of approximately 50 percent of the black and 50 percent of the white population within the SREB states in 1968. Counting 22 free-access, predominantly black institutions as not effectively accessible to the white population, the percentage of whites within commuting distance of a free-access institution dropped from 50 to 47 percent. Once this adjustment was made, the percentage of persons within commuting distance of a free-access institution in 1968 was higher for blacks than for whites in nine of the 14 SREB states, while the opposite was true in Virginia, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina and Louisiana.

While free-access institutions were and are estimated to be within commuting distance of substantially equal proportions of blacks and whites, disparities exist in the degree to which persons living in communities of varying size were within commuting distance of a free-access institution. (See Table 2).

Most notable in this regard was the decrease from 40 percent to 30 percent in the percentage of persons in the SREB region living within commuting distance of a free-access institution in central cities of more than one million population for the period 1958-1968, the only period for which data are available.

Within the Southern region, increases in coverage were apparent for persons in every other type of community except for counties with less than 20,000 population. Coverage increased the most and was the highest in communities of 50,000 to 249,000 population where, by 1968, 71 percent of the population lived within commuting distance of a free-access institution. Supporting the principle that each community should have its own higher education institution, the SREB states had the highest percentage of persons within commuting distance of a free-access institution in categories of communities with less than one million population.

In summary, great progress was made within the region during the period 1958-1972, both in terms of increasing the percentage of individuals within commuting distance of a free-access institution from 36 to 50 percent and in increasing the number of free-access institutions by 149. However, opportuni-

ties for free-access education did not increase in highly urbanized areas. Furthermore, the existence of de facto segregation meant that higher education institutions were not utilized as fully as possible, while the decrease in the percentage of public free-access four-year institutions meant that junior- and senior-level instruction was becoming prohibitively expensive for many.

EXPANDING ACCESS THROUGH POLICY DECISIONS

Increased attendance at postsecondary institutions, politicial statements, actions by federal and state governments and by foundations have contributed to a dramatic shift in public thinking about higher education. Some of the more generally accepted current positions noted by Willingham are:

- Some form of postsecondary education for the enhancement of career development and adult responsibility is a right, not merely a privilege.
- Education must be relevant to the talents and interests of individual students, though they may differ considerably from those of traditional college students.
- Inadequate preparation at the secondary level must be rectified, not used as a reason for rejecting the student or not educating him.
- Extraneous barriers such as accidents of birth and the costs of college should not hamper the accessibility of higher education.
- Social inequities in the rate of college admissions among various groups are a public responsibility to identify and alleviate.
- It is insufficient that opportunity simply be available; it must be available in a form and under conditions that are likely to attract students.

Although there is a thrust to make some form of postsecondary education available to all, the movement is marked by considerable differences of opinion on the means of making universal access to higher education a reality.

Many factors may affect attendance. If access is to be enhanced, decisions must be made as to the type and number of institutions which are to provide free-access education, the target populations to be served, the kinds of admissions policies to be adopted, the type and amount of financial aid to be made available and the means by which educational resources are to be coordinated.

Table 2

Changes in the Percentage of Different Populations within Commuting Distance of a Free-Access College, by Region, 1958 and 1968

	Percentage within commuting distance							
	Northeast		*Midwest*		*SREB States*		*West*	
Community Type	*1958*	*1968*	*1958*	*1968*	*1958*	*1968*	*1958*	*1968*
Metropolitan Areas (SMSA)*								
1,000,000+	8	28	29	37	34	34	52	54
Central cities	(4)	(29)	(34)	(44)	(40)	(30)	(43)	(44)
Fringe areas	(14)	(27)	(20)	(30)	(29)	(38)	(61)	(62)
500,000 to 999,000	3	38	37	12	34	57	40	55
250,000 to 499,000	23	49	35	39	41	59	35	48
50,000 to 249,000	34	71	32	47	46	71	50	61
Counties not in SMSA								
20,000+	24	51	34	35	36	55	48	50
Under 20,000	8	24	20	23	27	27	16	17
Total	15	38	31	33	36	50	44	51

*Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas

NOTE: More detailed information citing the percentage of the white, black, and total populations within commuting distance of a free-access institution for each community type within each SREB state in 1958 and 1968 is available upon request.

New Institutions

Additional free-access institutions may be provided by a number of actions which include (1) establishing new "traditional" free-access institutions in additional locations (2) expanding the network of higher education institutions to include other than traditional institutions and/or (3) changing admissions policies and/or lowering fees to permit reclassification of existing institutions as free-access institutions.

Willingham estimated in 1968 that 99 new free-access institutions would be necessary in the region to provide coverage for 80 percent of the population while 156 new institutions would be required if a free-access institution were to be within commuting distance of 90 percent of the population in each of the SREB states.

Less than eight new free-access institutions would need to be established in the states of West Virginia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Kentucky and North Carolina in order for 90 percent of the state's population to be in commuting distance of a free-access institution. On the other hand, Texas would need 39 new institutions and Alabama would need 17 new institutions to achieve this level of coverage.

In a similar vein, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in its report entitled *New Students and New Places* recommended establishment of 15-18 new community colleges in the region. The need for new institutions within large metropolitan areas with estimated populations of more than 500,000 in 1968 was particularly great. In this regard, the Commission recommended establishment of 19-32 new community colleges and nine new comprehensive four-year state colleges in areas with a population in excess of 500,000 within the region.

Obviously, establishing this many additional new institutions would be a large task. However, there is precedence for the establishment of a great many new institutions as the number of colleges and university campuses enrolling freshmen in the region increased from 538 in 1958 to 799 in 1972. At the same time, the number of free-access institutions increased within the SREB states from 191 to approximately 340.

Expanding Resources

If presently existing and often untapped educational resources within the periphery of education were regarded as potential free-access institutions and incorporated as part of a statewide plan—a second alternative—it would not be necessary to create totally new institutions. Given the dearth and lack of coordination of information about non-traditional educational programs and institutions at this time, it would be difficult to enumerate the number of types of educational programs offered by proprietary institutions, postsecondary area-vocational schools, business, government, industry or the armed forces, which would meet the free-access criteria of proximity, low cost and relatively open admission.

If currently peripheral institutions and programs were regarded as integral parts of a state's total educational resources, the number and variety of educational offerings would be greatly expanded. The scope and function of state higher education coordinating or governing boards would also have to be broadened considerably if this alternative for expanding access were to be implemented.

The Admissions Barrier

Changes in admission policies and lowered tuition would provide a third means for increasing the number of free-access institutions in addition to expanding and legitimizing the number and variety of postsecondary educational opportunities.

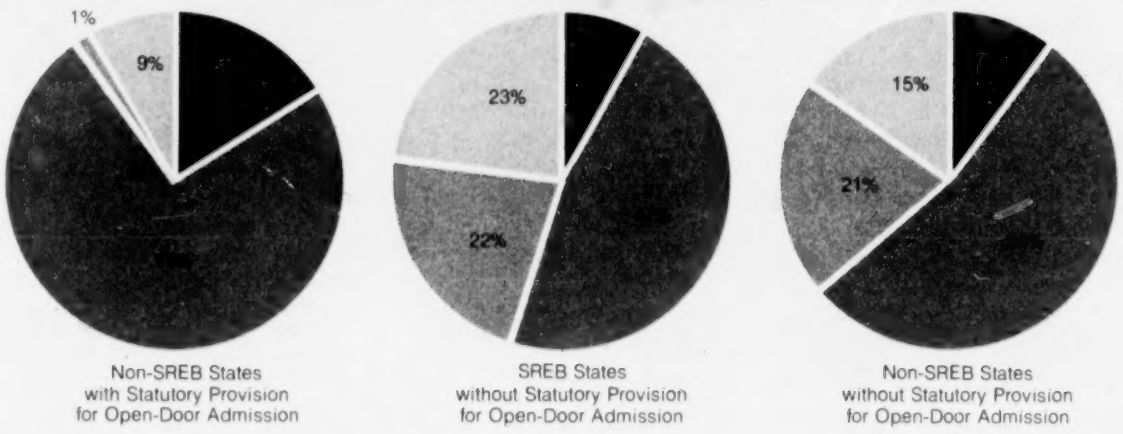
Steps must be taken to assure that major segments of a state's range of institutions and programs freely admit students 18 and over who want to learn regardless of their educational backgrounds. Currently, none of the SREB states have enacted legislation in accordance with a Carnegie Commission recommendation that "community colleges should provide admission to all applicants who are high school graduates or are persons over 18 years of age who are capable of benefiting from continuing education." Statutory provisions similar to the one recommended by the Carnegie Commission now exist in California, Colorado, Illinois, Oregon and Washington.

In general, as noted in Figure 2, the attitudes of two-year college presidents in SREB states were less favorable toward policies to encourage admission of those without a high school diploma or the equivalent than in other states. As would be expected, particularly large differences existed in the admission policies preferred by two-year college presidents in the five non-SREB states with statutory provision for open door admission to community colleges as compared with the policy preferences in both SREB and non-SREB states without such statutes.

Given the lower rate of high school graduation in the SREB states compared with the rest of the nation, the postsecondary educational opportunities of many of the South's citizens appears to be severely limited. Three states with open-door statutes—California, Washington and Oregon—had the highest rates of enrollment in public two-year colleges.

Figure 2

Comparison of the Percentages of Two-Year College Presidents Favoring Various Admissions Policies in States with and without Statutory Provisions for Open-Door Admissions, SREB and non-SREB States, 1970


1%
9%
23%
22%
15%
21%
Non-SREB States with Statutory Provision for Open-Door Admission
SREB States without Statutory Provision for Open-Door Admission
Non-SREB States without Statutory Provision for Open-Door Admission
Key
Admit all whether high school graduates or not
Admit all who can profit from instruction whether high school graduates or not
Admit all with high school diplomas or the equivalent
Admit all with high school diplomas or the equivalent who can profit from instruction

Source: John W. Huther, "The Open-Door and the Law," *College Board Review* (Spring, 1972)

Thus despite the fact that a policy of open-door admission to a free-access institution does not guarantee admission to a given program at a given time, the existence of open-door statutes appears to be a factor contributing positively toward increased accessibility and attendance.

The Financial Barrier

The importance of financial aid—a fourth means of expanding access—in a decision to go to college is illustrated by a number of studies. One boy in five and one girl in four in the eleventh grade feels that inability to earn enough money will have a "great deal of influence" on their possible decision to skip college, according to one recent study. Increased state and federal aid to students will be necessary on a large scale through various programs if the national goal of removing the economic barriers to higher education by 1976, as announced by the Carnegie Commission, is to be achieved.

If open-access to higher education is to be encouraged, reduced tuition must be in effect for at least the first two years. Implementation of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education recommendation that "states revise their legislation wherever necessary to provide for uniform low tuition or no tuition charges at public two-year colleges" would help to facilitate access greatly. However, this recommendation runs contrary to the present trend, which shows tuition and fees at all types of institutions in most SREB states and throughout the nation increasing at unprecedented rates, due in part to the financial difficulties of higher education institutions.

The recent passage of the Education Amendments of 1972 providing a Basic Education Opportunity Grant entitlement for students in the amount of $1,400 less the expected family contribution should be of great aid to potential low-income students. However, adequate supplemental state loan programs are sorely needed to meet the rising costs of educating middle-income students, especially in private institutions.

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Coordination and Planning of Programs

Finally, and perhaps most important, if access to higher education is to be improved, a series of policy decisions must be made with regard to the means by which planning for and coordination of existing and additional postsecondary educational resources made available through apprenticeship and military programs, proprietary schools and in-service training may take place at the local and state level.

Guidelines must be developed for coordinating related programs among the various units of a state's total postsecondary system. Information concerning program offerings must be disseminated by diverse channels to diverse target groups. State-level planning data must be translatable into local needs and educators, for example, in community colleges and area-vocational technical schools must cooperate in sharing information and serving the needs of the populations served.

The component aspects which determine the accessibility of higher education—proximity, cost, admission policy, perceived relevance of program offerings and motivations of individuals to seek some form of postsecondary education—are highly variable and lead to a variety of inequities in attendance. When these inequities are identified by planners at state, regional and local levels, appropriate policies may be devised and progress made toward the achievement of universal educational accessibility.

Technical assistance and funds for comprehensive statewide planning, particularly in the area of postsecondary occupational education, are being made available through two new programs under Title X—The Community Colleges and Occupational Education Sections—of the recently-passed Education Amendments of 1972. One section authorizes $850 million over three years to help states design, establish and conduct postsecondary occupational education programs. The other section authorizes $275 million over three years for matching grants for planning, establishing and conducting initial operations of new community colleges and for expanding existing colleges.

Funds at this time have been authorized and have yet to be appropriated. However, the manner in which individual states go about creating state postsecondary education commissions broadly representative of public and private, non-profit and proprietary institutions will have a great effect upon the receipt of planning and program grants, especially for state occupational education programs. The effectiveness of regional, state and local planning efforts resulting from Title X funds will largely determine the degree of accessibility of various forms of postsecondary education for the remainder of this decade and most of the 1980s.

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